

Newton Armstrong

nature pieces (2012-13)

for six instruments
and electronic sounds

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Instrumentation

clarinet in B \flat

guitar (6-string acoustic, with bottleneck)

piano

violin

viola

violoncello

The score is notated in C. The piece requires a conductor and an electronics operator.

Electronic Sounds

Several passages involve precisely timed interactions between the acoustic instruments and the electronic sounds. These passages are marked by cue numbers on the conductor's staff, where each cue activates the corresponding electronic sounds, as well as a click-track for the conductor. The cues may be triggered by either the electronics operator or the conductor (using a controller pedal or switch).

The electronic sounds are available at:

<http://staff.city.ac.uk/newton.armstrong.1/nature-pieces/sounds.zip>

These are 3-channel soundfiles. The stereo sound to be projected to the loudspeakers appears on channels 1 and 2. The click-track appears on channel 3.

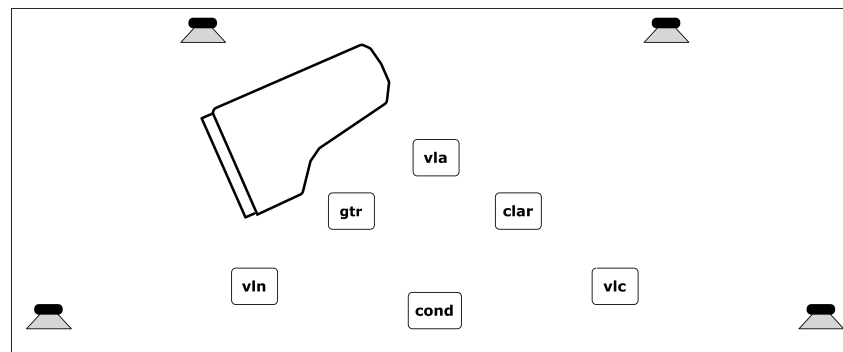
Four loudspeakers should be used for projection of the electronic sounds (see stage layout diagram below), creating a balanced soundfield enveloping the instrumentalists. The electronic sounds should always blend and fuse with the instrumental sounds, never pushing to the foreground. Levels will need to be carefully monitored and adjusted for each performance situation.

Amplification

The guitar should be lightly amplified with a microphone. The amplified sound should be routed to a small, high-quality loudspeaker, positioned close to the instrument. The amplified sound should be as clean and 'pure' as possible. It's best to avoid the use of contact microphones and guitar or keyboard amps.

Depending on the size and acoustic of the performance space, the piano may need to be amplified with microphones. The amplified sound should be routed to a small, high-quality loudspeaker, positioned close to the instrument. The key passages requiring amplification are those employing harmonics, between bars 19-63 of the second movement.

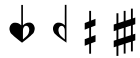
Stage Layout



Symbols



Approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ tone flat or sharp of the designated pitch.



$\frac{3}{4}$ tones flat, $\frac{1}{4}$ tone flat, $\frac{1}{4}$ tone sharp, $\frac{3}{4}$ tones sharp.



Mute any continuing resonance (e.g. sounding strings).



Pizzicato with nail. A sharp, percussive attack.



Guitar: Plectrum.

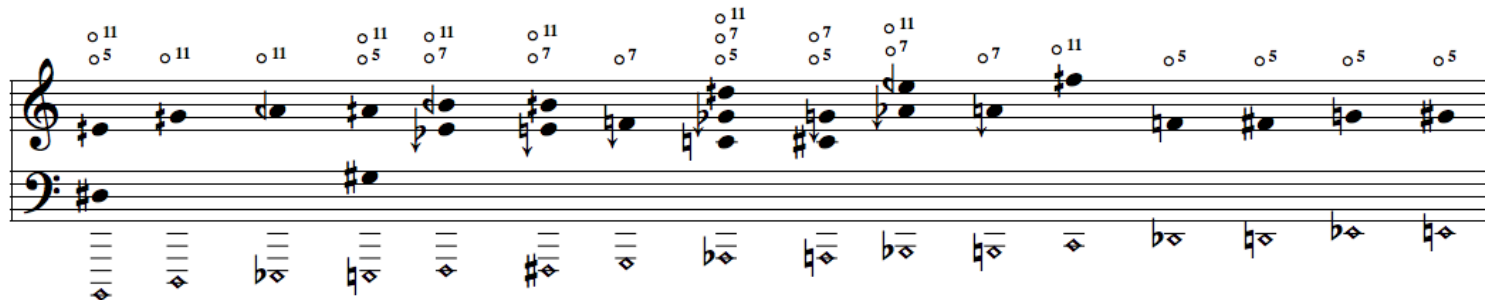


Piano: Damp the string between the hammer and the pegs. The notated pitch should be clearly recognisable.

Piano Harmonics

A number of piano harmonics are to be played in the second movement, between bars 19-63. The harmonic nodes should be located in advance of performance, and marked on the piano strings using small adhesive labels. Sounds are produced at the 5th, 7th and 11th harmonic nodes only. Multiple nodes are available for the 7th and 11th harmonics. Where all other factors are equal (e.g., ease of movement between nodes, layout of the piano frame), the node at the highest position on the string should be chosen.

The following harmonics are used:



PROGRAMME NOTE

These two pieces stem from a long-held fascination with the ways in which nature is represented and evoked in music. In particular, I was interested in working with idioms and topics that have historically been put to use in musical 'appeals to nature'; i.e. in constructions and evocations of the folkloric, the idyllic, the archaic, and the hieratic. These idioms include: *pedal points* (a precedent is the gradual expansion and proliferation over the pedal in the *Rheingold* Prelude), *distant bells* (bell-like sonorities, and also insistent iambic rhythms), *mediant modulations* ('brightenings', or patterns of shifting light), *contained movement* (fluctuation in stasis, 'forest murmurs'), *waves of energy*, and *haziness/desubstantialisation* (the shimmering or 'hovering' quality in Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, or Webern's *Im sommerwind*). I was not particularly concerned with evoking nature in my own pieces, but at the same time I was not particularly interested in establishing a kind of detached or ironic distance from the historical models either. What I was interested in perhaps goes somewhat closer to Lukács' notion of 'second nature', where the natural is understood as a socially determined and mediated category, standing in contrast to the nature it represents.

aria

$$\begin{array}{cc} 3 & 4 \\ 16 & 8 \end{array}$$

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3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3

16 8 16 8 16 8 8 8 16

23

clar

gtr

pno

vln

vla

vlc

cond

pp *mf* *pp* *mp* *ppp* *pp* *p* *ppp*

mf *f* *mp* *p*

p *mp* *p* *8va* *mf* *p* *pp* *Ped.*

ppp *mf* *ppp* *p* *f* *ord.* *pont.* *ord.* *pont.* *ord.* *pont.* *ord.* *pont.* *ord.* *pont.*

mf *p* *mf* *p* *f* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p*

ppp *mf* *ppp* *p* *f* *ord.* *pont.* *ord.* *pont.* *ord.* *pont.* *ord.* *pont.* *ord.* *pont.*

ppp *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p*

40

clar

gtr

pno

vln

vla

vlc

cond

elec

mf f mf mp mf p mp f ff f ff ff

mf p mp p mp f ff f

(Ped.) Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

8va 8vb

46

clar

gtr

pno

vln

vla

vcl

cond

elec

3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 7 4

16 8 16 8 16 8 16 8 16 8 16 8

poco marc.

pp

Ped.

mf

pp

ord.

mp

tasto, poco vib.

ord., non vib.

III

IV

(non vib.)

pont.

sub p

II

I

8^{va}

Sost.

[illegible]

This musical score is for the piece 'L'Espresso' by Luciano Berio. It is a full orchestral score with a conductor's part. The score is written for the following instruments:

- Clarinet (clar):** Features complex rhythmic patterns with triplets and dynamic markings like *pp*, *pppp*, *mp*, *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *mp*.
- Guitar (gtr):** Includes arpeggiated figures and dynamic markings such as *mp*, *p*, *mf*, *mp*, *mf*.
- Piano (pno):** Features a complex texture with triplets, dynamic markings like *p*, *pp*, *ppp*, and a section marked 'Sost.' (Sostenuto) with a 'Ped.' (Pedal) instruction.
- Violin (vln):** Includes a section marked 'con sord.' (con sordina) and dynamic markings like *mp*, *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *mp*, *pp*.
- Viola (vla):** Includes a section marked 'con sord.' and dynamic markings like *mp*, *pp*.
- Violoncello (vlc):** Includes a section marked 'con sord.' and dynamic markings like *mp*, *pp*, *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *mp*.
- Conductor (cond):** Provides a rhythmic and dynamic guide for the ensemble.
- Electric Piano (elec):** Features a section marked 'sim.' (simulazione) with dynamic markings like *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *mp*.

The score is written in 4/8 time and includes various musical notations such as triplets, arpeggios, and dynamic markings. The conductor's part is written in 4/8 time and includes a section marked '9' and '10'.

[illegible]

idyll

[illegible]

3
8
4
8
3
8

clar

gtr

pno

vln

vla

vlc

cond

3
8
4
8
3
8

22 $\text{♩} = 56$

4/8 3/8 5/8 3/8 9/16 3/8 4/8

clar $\text{♩} = 56$

gtr $\text{♩} = 56$

pno $\text{♩} = 56$

vln $\text{♩} = 56$

vla $\text{♩} = 56$

vlc $\text{♩} = 56$

cond $\text{♩} = 56$

4/8 3/8 5/8 3/8 9/16 3/8 4/8

$\text{♩} = 48$
 $\frac{5}{8}$
 $\frac{7}{16}$
 $\frac{3}{8}$
 $\frac{9}{16}$
 $\frac{4}{8}$
 $\frac{9}{16}$
 $\frac{4}{8}$

clar 33
 p mp p mf p ppp p mf p $pppp$ (barely audible)

gtr
 f mf mp f mf mp

pno
 mf p f mp mp p pp mp f mp p mf

vln
 p mp p mf ppp mp ppp p mf p

vla
 p mp p mf ppp mp ppp p mf p

vlc
 p mp p mf ppp mp ppp p mf p

$\text{♩} = 48$
 $\frac{5}{8}$
 $\frac{7}{16}$
 $\frac{3}{8}$
 $\frac{9}{16}$
 $\frac{4}{8}$
 $\frac{9}{16}$
 $\frac{4}{8}$

cond

48 $\text{♩} = 56$ $\frac{3}{8}$ $\frac{4}{8}$ $\frac{3}{8}$ $\frac{4}{8}$ $\frac{3}{8}$

clar *sub. mf* *p* *mf* *p* *f* *pp* *mf*

gtr *mf* *mp* *mf* *f* *f*

pno *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *ff* *f* *mf*

vln *mf* *p* *mf* *pizz.* *arco* *f*

vla *mf* *p* *mp* *pizz.* *arco* *pizz. (pos. ord.)* *arco* *f*

vlc *sub. mf* *p* *p* *p* *pizz. (pos. ord.)* *arco* *p*

cond

$\text{♩} = 56$ $\frac{3}{8}$ $\frac{4}{8}$ $\frac{3}{8}$ $\frac{4}{8}$ $\frac{3}{8}$

3/8 4/8 5/8 4/8

56

clar

gtr

pno

vln

vla

vcl

cond

elec

f *p* *pp* *mp* *ppp*

f *mf* *ff* *fff* *f* *fff*

mp *8va* *3* *p* *8va* *3* *f* *8va* *3* *fff*

p *p* *8va* *3*

mp *tasto* *pp* *>* *pp*

f *mf* *p* *non vib.* *mf* *poco vib.* *p* *non vib.*

3 4 5 4 2 3

8va

23 $\frac{23}{8}$ ♩ = 48 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ 4 $\frac{4}{8}$ 3 $\frac{3}{8}$

63

clar

p *ppp* \triangleleft *mp*

p \triangleleft *mp* \triangleright *ppp*

gliss. with bottleneck

8^{va} ①

gtr

mf

frame hit (bright)

f

Ped.

8^{va}

Sost.

pno

vln

vla

p

8^{va} flaut.

p

pizz., poco vib.

p

vcl

cond

click: 3+4+4+4+4+4

8^{va}

sustained to m.84

elec

72

17/8 3/8 4/8 3/8 4/8 13/8

clar

pp

p

mp

p

mf

p

mp

ppp

gtr

p

mf

pno

pp

fff

f

mf

p

mp

mf

Ped.

Ped.

vln

15^{ma}

pizz.

fff

f

mp

8^{va}

arco

p < mf

p

mp

ppp

vla

p

pp

flaut.

8^{va}

pizz.

fff

mf

p

arco

p < mf

pont.

tasto

sf

ppp

vcl

arco

pp

pizz.

mf

mp

pp

arco

p < mf

p

mp

ppp

17/8 3/8 4/8 3/8 4/8 13/8

cond

click: 5+4+4+4

elec

(8^{va})

"SIX"

"SEVEN"

13 4 11 4
8 8 8 8

79

clar

ppp

mp

p

slap

slap

gtr

étouffé

15^{ma}

f

mf

p

pp

pno

pp

vln

tasto

p

legno batt. (pos. ord.)

IV III

p

vla

ppp *p*

legno batt.

IV

p

3

vlc

pont. III

mp *ppp*

13 4 11 4
8 8 8 8

cond

click: 5+4+4

click: 3+4+4

elec

(Δ^{ma})

"FOURTEEN"

(Δ^{ma})